

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 065764

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 065764 ACTION ACAPULCO INFO BUENOS

AIRES 02 APR

QUOTE

S E C R E T STATE 065764

EXDIS - TOSEC 37

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR, CU

SUBJECT: ARGENTINE INITIATIVE ON CUBA

1. ON APRIL 1 ARGENTINE AMBASSADTR ORFILA CALLED ON ACTING SECRETARY TO CARRY OUT INSTRUCTIONS HE SAID WERE APPROVED BY THE ARGENTINE CABINET AND PRESIDENT PERON. AFTER NOTING AND INDICATING GOA'S SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT HIGH LEVEL OF CORDIALITY, OPENNESS, AND FRANKNESS IN U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS, ORFILA SAID HE WISHED OFFICIALLY TO INFORM U.S. THAT GOA HAD NOW DECIDED TO TAKE INITIATIVE IN RAISING QUESTION OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA IN INTER-AMERICAN FORUM. BEFORE EMBARKING ON THIS POLICY, GOA WISHED U.S. TO BE FULLY INFORMED IN ADVANCE.

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2. ARGENTINA WILL RAISE QUESTION OF OAS SANCTIONS ON

CUBA, WHICH ORFILA TERMED OBSOLETE, AT FORTHCOMING MEETING OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE FOREIGN MINISTERS IN WASHINGTON AND AT THE OASGA IN ATLANTA IN MID-APRIL.

3. ORFILA SAID GOA BELIEVED THAT BY TJFING SUCH A STEP ARGENTINA WOULD FACILITATE A CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY BRINGING U.S. INTO THE MAIN STREAM VIEWS OF THE MAJORITY OF THE OAS MEMBERS BELIEVING THE TIME HAS COME TO REVIEW AND REVOKE OAS SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA. ORFILA SAID HE AWARE OF SUPPORT FOR SUCH A MOVE AMONG SOME CIRCLES IN U.S.

ORFILA SAID ARGENTINA WOULD SERVE AS A SPEARHEAD FOR THIS MOVEMENT. HE SAID SEVERE INTERNAL PRESSURES IN ARGENTINA MADE THIS COURSE OBLIGATORY. BUT GOA WANTED TO ACT IN CLOSE AND FRIENDLY CONSULTATION WITH THE U.S.

4. THE ACTING SECRETARY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR ARGENTINA'S FRIENDLY CONSULTATION. HE SAID THE U.S. HAD NO INDICATION THAT CASTRO HAD SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED HIS WAYS OR THAT HE WANTED LOOD RELATIONS. THEREFORE, U.S. POLICY REMAINED UNCHANGED. ORFILA WAS REMINDED THAT PREVIOUS INTER-AMERICAN MEETINGS SHOWED THE CUBA ISSUE AS THE SINGLE MOST DIVISIVE MATTER THAT COULD BE RAISED. WE BELIEVED OAS MEMBERSHIP WOULD BE SPLIT AND DOUBTED VOTES NECESSARY TO REVOKE THE OAS SANCTIONS COULD BE ASSEMBLED. ON THE OTHER HAND, RAISING CUBAN ISSUE COULD POSSIBLY BE HARMFUL TO THE FAVORABLE EVOLUTION OF INTER-AMERICAN POLICY. WE HOPED THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT WOULD RECONSIDER ITS PLAN TO RAISE THIS BITTERLY CONTROVERSIAL AND DIVISIVE POLITICAL PROBLEM. MR. RUSH SUGGESTED THAT THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT DELAY IMPLEMENTING ITS PLANS UNTIL THE SECRETARY AND VIGNES HAD A CHANCE TO DISCUSS THIS EITHER IN NEW YORK OR WASHINGTON.

5. AMBASSADOR ORFILA NOTED THAT MEXICAN FOREIGN MINISTER RABASA HAD BEEN IN CUBA AND THAT MEXICAN PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA WOULD SOON VISIT THERE. ORFILA SAID THIS RAISED THE QUESTION AS TO WHICH COUNTRY IN LJT N AMERICA WOULD EXERT LEADERSHIP. ARGENTINA WAS DETERMINED TO ASSERT LEADERSHIP ON AN ISSUE RAPIDLY GAINING SUPPORT

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IN LATIN AMERICA. ORFILA SAID THE EVENTS WERE OVERWHELMING US AND THAT ARGENTINA COULD NO LONGER WAIT BEYOND THE FORTHCOMING MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON AND ATLANTA. NONETHELESS, HE WOULD CONVEY ACTING SECRETARY'S SUGGESTION TO HIS GOVERNMENT.

6. ORFILA ALSO ALLUDED TO THE MATTER OF SALES TO CUBA BY AMERICAN SUBSIDIARIES IN ARGENTINA. HE SAID THE GOA HAD

BEEN PROMISED AN EARLY ANSWER AND THAT THE CANADIAN CASE HAD UNSETTLING EFFECT IN ARGENTINA WHICH EXPLAINED RECENT TOUGH PUBLIC STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF ECONOMY GELBARD.

7. THE MEETING CONCLUDED TN THE NOTE THAT THE AMBASSADOR WOULD REPORT POINTS DISCUSSED AND THAT WE WTULD REMAIN IN CLOSE CONTACT.

8. /THERE ARE SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT SERIOUS INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND STRONG DESIRE TO EXERT INTER-AMERICAN LEADERSHIP HAVE INDUCED GOA TO SEIZE UPON CUBAN ISSUE AS THE VEHICLE BEST SUITED TO MOLLIFY PERONIST LEFT AND ASSURE ARGENTINA A PIVOTAL ROLE IN FORTHCOMING MEETINGS. RABASA'S TRIP TO HAVANA AND ARGENTINE JEALOUSY OF MEXICO PROBABLY TRIGGERED THIS APPROACH. RUSH UNQUOTE RUSH

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